Bring The War Home:

Recovering Anti-Imperialism

(Webb Dock Blockade, Naarm (Melbourne) – submitted to Palestine Action "All colonial logistics are legitimate targets for anti-genocide action").[1]

[1] Palestine Action. (@pal_action), "DEATH TOLL: Toll Holdings Drives Genocide", *Instagram,* 16th December 2024.

"We argued that the role of white people - just like our role vis a vis the Vietnam War was to find ourselves in alliance with the Vietnamese, in alliance with the black struggle, for self-determination. Not just for an end to the war, but the right to determine their own future." – **Bill Ayers, Ex-Leader of Weather Underground**

This essay is for fellow travellers who feel stripped of dignity. For those who believe solidarity cannot be built from paternalism. Who have come to see the weakness and futility of boycotts, marches and writing. For those of us who now sit between celebration and defeatism, I write this with the hope that our collective actions can become more than the sum of their parts. In the midst of the current relief and triumphant responses to the declaration of a "ceasefire" in Gaza – while the Zionist enemy and Palestinian collaborators[2] now rage through Jenin - I do not feel a sense of victory for my role in opposing Zionist colonial holocaust, but one of failure. At the announcement of the ceasefire a woman in Gaza declared "We are the ones who endured and stood firm. There are no achievements to credit anyone, not any leader, not any official, not any country, the achievement is here."[3] She

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[2] Al-Araj, B. "Dismantle it and let them fall", *Electronic Intifada,* 12th October 2020, Available at: https://electronicintifada.net/content/dismantle-it-and-let-them-fall/31281

[3] Middle East Eye, 2025, *Gaza will come back even more beautiful than before': Palestinians vow to rebuild after*

exacts truth upon the hollow social rituals we have come to term "solidarity".

For all the talk of resistance, internationalism and the "interconnectedness" of struggle, the culmination of the Western Palestine Solidarity movement (outside of Palestine Action and a few Anarchist direct action cells) to face off against a Zionist apocalypse in Gaza can be summarised as: A to B marches sanctioned by the state, coordinated with cops and protest marshals to police ourselves into redundancy;[4] unions that attend public rallies while defending their own members complicity in loading weapons for Israel or working on military vessels which coordinate bombings on Gaza;[5] pickets which are not pickets but social club events; boat blockings where

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ceasefire, Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LeKb30E6S18

[4] Including marching too far off of the sanctioned course, letting off flares, holding resistance flags or even wearing face coverings, a prerequisite for protection from surveillance.

[5] Sparrow, J. 2024, "The Production of Death A Year of British Trade Union Complicity", *New Socialist,* Available at: https://newsocialist.org.uk/the-production-of-death/ . Also despite the fact that ending this was a specific call from Palestinian trade unions[5];

no boats are actually blocked;[6] and "weird camping"[7] on university lawns where, outside of specific displays of pig violence against students were quietly left alone for a few weeks and then dismantled with threats by university administrations without much pushback.[8] I also do not believe that the argument in regards to "there is more state/police repression now than there was" is an effective excuse (there are always ways to subvert repression), or that such a claim is actually true. Student encampments in the U.S. were violently put down in 2024 by pigs, but the U.S. military open fired at a number of Anti-Vietnam War student protests in the 1970s, with a handful of students injured and shot dead on their own campuses.[9] Infact the shooting dead of students was specifically cited by President Richard Nixon in response to the violent

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[6] Anonymous, 2023, "Reportback from the Port Blockade in Tacoma: The Boat That Wasn't Blocked", *The Anarchist Library,* Available at: https://theanàrchistlibrary.org/library/anonymous-reportback-from-the-port-blockade-in-tacoma-the-boat-that-wasn-t-blocked?v=1699500379 ; Anonymous, 2023, "The Boat that Wasn't Blocked: 'Australian' version", *New Socialist,* Available at: *https://newsocialist.org.uk/transmissions/the-boat-that-wasnt-blocked/*

[7] Description of the 2024 student encampments by a direct actionist comrade.

[8] Al-Asaad, F. 2025, "Reflections on the "Global Student Intifada", *Abolition Media,* Available at: https://abolitionmedia.noblogs.org/13805/

[9] AlJazeera. "Before Israel's war on Gaza: Other times US campuses became battlegrounds", *AlJazeera,* 25th April 2024, Available at: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/4/25/past-student-protests-in-the-us-working-hed

suppression of the Attica Prison Uprising a year after in 1971:

> "The president's response: "This might have one hell of a salutary effect. They can talk all they want about the radicals. You know what stops them? Kill a few."
>
> "Remember Kent State?" the president continues. "Didn't it have one hell of an effect, the Kent State thing?"
>
> "Sure did," replies Haldeman. "Gave them second thoughts."[10]

If bullets and mass caging did not stop Anti-Vietnam War protestors, White anti-Imperialist and Black Liberation warriors, then it must be asked what does that say of how seriously we comprehend what constitutes a "struggle" today?

The point of this essay is not to waste time chastising anyone because I think shame is not an effective motivator for action. What I wish to do is to convince you that this moment of "ceasefire" is a space where we must first honestly recognise our own failures before we can regroup. This is not about self-pity or blame, but to reflect on the fact that to face the material reality we are in we must take this moment to reorganise ourselves for the coming

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[10] Miller Center. No Date, *'To Kill a Few'*, Available at: https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/educational-resources/kill-few

battles ahead against Zionism, Imperialism and fascism. As George Jackson detailed on the eve of the counterrevolutions that would take his own life and the lives of many others within the Black Liberation movements of the early 1970s:

> *"It is not defeatist to acknowledge that we have lost a battle. How else can we "regroup" and even think of carrying on the fight. At the center of revolution is realism."*[11]

This essay seeks to look at two examples of previous anti-imperialist solidarity movements in the West so as to reintroduce radical history into our social movements. It seems that a lot of effort has gone into denying, erasing and forgetting the struggles of the past. Leaving us with theory and history that help to sustain counterinsurgency[12] practices within our movements, or which reinforce an ideological defeatism where people have come to accept

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[11] Jackson, G. 1972, *Blood In My Eye* (Penguin Books: Harmondsworth).

[12] "by "counterinsurgency," I mean the full spectrum of pacification, isolation, and domestication strategies that extend beyond violent state repression. What I'm calling the contemporary liberal/progressive counterinsurgency is a loosely coordinated bloc that consists of large philanthropic foundations, liberal think tanks, academics, elected officials, media pundits, nonprofit organizations, celebrity activists, and social media influencers, among others." Rodriguez, D. "Insurgency and counterinsurgency: an interview with Dylan Rodriguez", *MR Online,* 2nd November 2022, Available at: https://mronline.org/2022/11/10/insurgency-and-counterinsurgency/

that "nothing more can be done". The point of radical theory is not to accumulate books, quotes and martyrs like they are Pokémon cards. Rather, theory must be realised as a weapon, as revolutionary Pan-Africanist Amilcar Cabral understood.[13] For the realization of theory adequate for the present moment, we must reconstruct our histories of struggle not for their own sake, but to understand it better on *our* own terms.[14]

While attending a number of rallies in different cities since Operation Al Aqsa Flood on October 7th 2023, I have heard two recurring examples cited for understanding the present moment: the Anti-Vietnam War protests and the Anti-Apartheid Movement. The argument has tended to go something like this: "just as with the Vietnam war and Apartheid South Africa, if we keep marching as they did, keep picketing as they did, boycotting as they did then we can force politicians to just stop supporting Israels crimes in Gaza and end its military occupation".[15] The problem

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[13] The purpose of theory is not to read so you have the "correct line" or can claim what the "real" history was. Its purpose is not to make us feel more informed or radical. Theory is a weapon. A weapon used to generate organised and militant opposition against Zionism, Imperialism and colonialism from our own local conditions. Cabral, Amilcar. 1966, *The Weapon of Theory,* Available at: https://www.marxists.org/subject/africa/cabral/1966/weapon-theory.htm

[14] Robinson, Cedric. 2000, *Black Marxism, The Making of the Black Radical Tradition,* (The University of North Carolina Press: London), p. 307

[15] This is paraphrasing a number of different rally speakers.

with this presentation is twofold and both relate to broader issues of the Palestine Solidarity Movement in the West.

Firstly, the mass rallies we have seen much more resemble the Iraq War protests rather than the historical examples of the Anti-Apartheid Movement or the Anti-Vietnam War protests.[16] The mass rallies against the Iraq war, some of the largest in world history, were a complete failure: Iraq was invaded, over a million people were murdered, tortured, disappeared or died as a result and the country's political and economic system was restructured to suit the needs of Western corporations and U.S. Imperial designs.[17] Why doing exactly the same thing twenty years later in the face of burgeoning fascist/Neoliberal police states with far harsher protest laws, more advanced systems of surveillance and pig brutality would work now is anyone's guess.

Secondly, the idea that what ended the Vietnam War and Apartheid in South Africa were "peaceful" A to B rallies in the West, is completely untrue. These are rather whitewashed histories. Reconstructed both by design

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[16] Vincent Bevins provides a good interview here in relation to his latest book "If we burn" looking at the "mass protest decade" which also acts as an analysis of how contemporary state counterrevolutions/counterinsurgencies operation, but also fuck JewishCurrents and its apologism for Zionists: Press, A. 2024, "A Counterrevolution always comes", *JewishCurrents,* Available at: https://jewishcurrents.org/vincent-bevins-if-we-burn-mass-protests-2010s

[17] Klein, N. 2007, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (Penguin Books: London).

through state, media and educational institutions to displace popular memory and revolutionary history. Reinforced by a particular triumphalism and arrogance repeated by a white dominated "Left"/Anti-War movement, which prefers what I refer to as a Liberal Humanitarianism - a moralising discourse where we in the West work through "civil disobedient" means in a democratic society to pressure governments to paternalistically "end war" and promote "human rights" or in this case enforce a "ceasefire" through international institutions – as opposed to Anti-Imperialism.

For myself, I understand anti-Imperialism as rooted in the recognition that the inequalities between our movements and communities can only be abolished not through a deep-seated colonial paternalism, but rather in a joint opposition to Racial Capitalism emergent from our local conditions with shared risk and sacrifice in struggle. Contrary to a Liberal Humanitarianism which presents Palestinians, or Viets or South Africans merely as victims of senseless crimes - operating in deterritorializing and depoliticizing the struggles against racial capitalism, colonialism and Imperialism in colonized countries - Anti-Imperialism, builds concrete solidarity through a material front which corresponds theory, propaganda and solidarity in support of national liberation forces on the ground. Which in this instance were the Viet Cong, the African National Congress and today Hamas and other militant Palestinian factions such as the Al Aqsa Martyrs and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. I intend to use these two examples as points of departure in which to

interrogate counterinsurgent histories in favour of a lost, but reclaimable, strain of radicalism in Western Anti-Imperialist solidarity so that we are more able to make sense of the task that confronts us.

Vietnam: Third World Anti-Imperialism vs Liberal Humanitarianism

Take a look at the pictures below, the first from Chicago, 'United States' in 1968 and the second from Adelaide, 'Australia' in 1970. Think about the messaging and how this may be different to the messaging of much of the Palestine rallies we have seen over the last fifteen months.

(1968 Anti-Vietnam War March, Chicago U.S.A. Banners stating "Victory for the Viet Cong: Defeat Imperialism Everywhere").

(Anti-Vietnam War March 1970, Adelaide, Australia, banner stating "Victory to the Viet Cong").

The red and blue flags with the star in the centre held in both photos are the flags of the Viet Cong. The banners read "Victory to the Viet Cong" and "Victory to the Viet Cong: Defeat Imperialism Everywhere." By contrast, rally after rally over the last fifteen months has focused entirely on "civilian" casualties to the point where Palestinian resistance fighters are represented in an entirely different dehumanized category to Palestinian and calls for a "ceasefire" which depoliticizes the entire anti-colonial struggle as if settler colonialism is not an ongoing war against the Indigenous. The framing of the Palestine rallies and much of the discourse around Palestine has intentionally been premised upon a Liberal anti-war paternalism that prioritises the rights of "Palestinians" as a

generalised mass who have no agency and who need to be saved by our intervention.[18]

Not only does this narrative of human rights, illegality, dead children and ending war serve to disempower the ideology and historic process of national liberation in Palestine, it is a self-serving one. It divests social power to the very law and states which created, protected and arm Zionism for their own Imperialist designs and domestic models of counterinsurgency.[19] It also divests our own responsibility to take a course of action which may require risking something more than walking around in circles chanting "Intifada revolution" for a few hours. This is where

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[18] There are also non-ideological reasons why resistance groups have been marginalised. In Britain & 'Australia', expanding police repression means holding pro-resistance flags of Hamas and Hezbollah can get you charged under racist "anti-terror" legislation. But the renunciation of resistance forces goes beyond mere compliance with the state – there is active ideological and material collaboration. For example, marshals with the Palestine Action Group Sydney have gone out of their way to support police attempting to arrest people (and children) carrying resistance flags during rallies, as well as discouraging rally attendees from wearing (entirely legal) masks and face coverings that offer protection from state surveillance. I do not believe organisers from Palestine Action Group Sydney or similar organisations such as Palestine Solidarity Campaign in Britain actually *want* to lead marches supporting "Victory to AlQassam" nor do they want to find ways around these restrictions.

[19] Halper, J. 2015, *War Against the People: Israel, the Palestinians and Global Pacification* (Pluto Press: London).

the currency of promoting counterinsurgent social movement histories becomes clear. If people in the Anti-Vietnam War protests or the Anti-Apartheid Movement merely marched from A to B, held some peaceful demonstrations on behalf of ending human rights violations and boycotted some oranges and this eventually led to the end of the war and Apartheid, then it means the struggle now doesn't require us to break the law, risk prison time or a loss of social/class position. It doesn't require us to question the basic pillars of our own societies premised upon colonialism (ongoing settler war, mass-incarceration and land dispossession upon Black and Indigenous peoples in America and Australia) and Imperialism (Britain's ongoing support and involvement in bombings, invasions and military occupations of sovereign states across the South in the lubricating of circuits of global accumulation).

By contrast, it was understood by many involved in the Vietnam War protests that solidarity strategies were based upon materially assisting a people fulfil their revolt against colonialism – *not that we in the West were 'saving' them*. This was the ideology of Third Worldism and Anti-Imperialism, articulated by the Weatherman and Students for a Democratic Society in their call to "Bring the War Home"[20]. It meant support for the concrete forces undertaking armed struggle and to follow their example,

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[20] Varon, J. 2004, *Bringing the War Home The Weather Underground, the Red Army Faction, and Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties and Seventies* (University of California Press: Berkeley).

not just a depersonalised or disembodied 'resistance'. The Weatherman declared bluntly, "It's not so much that we're against the war; we're for the Vietnamese and their victory."[21]

The Tet Offensive

By the late 1960's opposition to the war in Vietnam was growing in the United States. The emergence of organisations such as the Black Panther Party and Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee would further the development of radical domestic opposition. However, one of the defining events which galvanised the growth of the protests and their more militant turn was not a sense of moral or political opposition to the war by Americans. Rather, it was the Tet Offensive of 1968 carried out by the Viet Cong (VC) in coordination with the PAVN (People's Army of North Vietnam). It was *the self-activity of the colonized that spurred on anti-Imperialism in the West, and eventually victory.*

The Tet Offensive was a major escalation in the Vietnam war wherein the VC and the PAVN carried out attacks against American and South Vietnamese (ARVN) military positions and cities in a hopes to stir social revolution against the U.S. backed client regime in Saigon and is recognised as the turning point in the war that led to the United States and Australia formally pulling out of South Vietnam in 1973. From a military perspective, the Tet Offensive was a complete failure. The VC and PAVN lost

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[21] Ibid, p. 124.

thousands of men over the course of the offensive, the intent of the assault to stir social revolution against the regime and American military did not materialise and the American and ARVN forces eventually retook most urban and rural areas that had been captured.

What the offensive did however, was demonstrate to American leadership and the public, which had been told that the United States was winning the war against the Communists, that this was a lie. After years of war and millions killed, the liberation forces were able to carry out effective and coordinated strikes across South Vietnam and American military positions and remained able to do so. In a sense, the Tet Offensive's most effective achievement was an instilling of ideological defeat upon the American state and military to continue supporting South Vietnam in a war that could not be won. The military offensive constituted the base for a *war of position*[22] to be fought within Western states. The Viet Cong provided ideological energy to domestic counter-hegemonic forces confronting American policing, capitalism and white supremacy. The Tet offensive reinforced a Third Worldist/Maoist legend: the Viet Cong, an army made up mostly of peasants and with far less technical capacity, advanced weaponry and firepower, could outlast the most militarily sophisticated empire in human history. It was a major step in wearing down the Imperialists will to keep

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[22] Egan D. 2016, "Gramsci's War of Position as Siege Warfare: Some Lessons From History", *Critique,* 44(4, November), pp. 435-450, doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/03017605.2016.1236486

fighting.[23] While military conflict continued in Vietnam, domestic counter-hegemonic forces from White Anti-Imperialists to Black revolutionaries could debilitate through socialised *siege warfare* their own governments through mass social, cultural, ideological and material contestation against Imperialism from within.

Because of this revelation, public opposition to the war grew immensely from 1968 onwards –and not strictly in the sense of an anti-war Liberal humanitarianism.

Days of Rage, Black radicalism and Anti-War militancy

The Vietnam War protests emerged and escalated in a period of the late 1960s and 1970s alongside growing wars of national liberation on the African continent, urban guerilla warfare and Black radicalism. This generation of protest and opposition to the war, from the campus to the streets and community, was informed with a notion that the struggle against White Supremacy and police occupation in America was intimately tied to the Imperialist war in Vietnam and its occupation by American soldiers and military contractors.

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[23] Lange, K. 2023, *Highlighting History: How "Tet" Began the End of Vietnam*, Available at: https://www.defense.gov/News/Feature-Stories/Story/Article/3291950/highlighting-history-how-tet-began-the-end-of-vietnam/ ; Real Time History, "The Vietnam War 1955-1975 (Full Documentary)", *Youtube*, November 2nd 2024, Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hSDAj550YQw

Huey P. Newton - co-founder of the Black Panther Party - even offered to send a cadre of Black Panthers to Vietnam to assist the Viet Cong, stating "your struggle is also our struggle, for we recognize that our common enemy is the American imperialist who is the leader of international bourgeois domination."[24] That members of a largely above ground organization in America fighting for Black people understood their struggle against capitalist white supremacy as joined across the face of the earth to the peasant armies of the Viet Cong and were willing to fight and die for it, speaks to the commitment to Anti-imperialism which coursed through much of the Anti-Vietnam War movement.

Internationalist solidarity did not necessarily require international travel however – and this is important for our purpose. It is said that the Viet Cong replied to Newton, informing him that the struggle of the Panthers against American empire was best placed on their own territory. Other members of the Black Liberation movement such as Russel 'Maroon' Shoatz infact criticized Newton on the same grounds (Newton himself came to regret the announcement), claiming that:

> "For those who wanted to fight or who were underground, he sent an open communique to the North Vietnamese government that he would make

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[24] Newton, H. 1970, *Letter to the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam*, Available at: https://web.viu.ca/davies/H324War/letter.HueyNewton.Vietnam.1970.htm

> 1000 BPP members available to fight in Vietnam against U.S. forces. This was very odd to say the least. Of course the Panthers were highly supportive of the Viet Cong's fight, but very few could see any reason not to show their support by stepping up armed action within the United States rather than on foreign ground. The Vietnamese government was of a similar opinion. They openly declined the offer, suggesting that the BPP could better help by supporting them from within the U.S."[25]

Shoatz's words align with escalation of domestic Black armed struggle as well as the growth of militant protest actions. Following the Tet Offensive in April 1968 came the famous occupations of Colombia University Buildings by members of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and Student Afro-American Society (SAS).[26] Then in October 1968 the street protests began to escalate rapidly under the banner of The Weatherman and SDS:

> "Weatherman, now the leadership of SDS, rebaptized the demonstrations the "Days of Rage" and gave them a new purpose: "to establish

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[25] Shoatz, R. 2007, *Black Fighting Formations: their strengths, weaknesses, and potentials,* Available at: https://trueleappress.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/120.-black-revolutionary-fighting-formations.pdf

[26] Moroa, M. 2024, *We Wanted to Destroy the university,* Available at: https://illwill.com/destroy-the-university

> another front against imperialism right here in America—to 'bring the war home.'"[27]

The Days of Rage protests included riots and property damage targeting the cars and businesses of wealthy Chicagoans. Battles with police became symbolic of heightening militancy of opposition to the Vietnam war and the increasing police militarisation occurring across the United States against Black and Socialist resistance.[28] They inspired a militancy which would continue to expand throughout the Anti-War movement through and beyond the United States formal evacuation from Vietnam in 1973. With the Weather Underground (and later the May 19th Communist Organization) engaging in prison breaks of captured comrades (such as Assata Shakur) and bombing campaigns against the institutions of the state in opposition to Imperialism.

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[27] Varon, J. *Bringing the War Home: The Weather Underground, the Red Army Faction, and Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties and Seventies* (University of California Press: Berkeley), p. 61.
[28] Ibid, p. 124.

(Leaders of the group then known as Weatherman in 1969, during protests in Chicago: (left to right) Jim Mellen, Peter Clapp, John Jacobs, Bill Ayers and Terry Robbins. Jacobs, Clapp and Ayers would later live for years as fugitives).

For the Weathermen, the call to "bring the war home" signalled the need to raise the social cost of the Imperialist assault on Vietnam upon the American state and its institutions. Recognising that peaceful A to B marches and rallies were fundamentally ineffective in that they accepted the terms provided by the very state to which was being opposed:

> "The sense that something more than demonstrations was needed coursed through radical circles on the eve of the November march. In FIRE! Weatherman charged that, "Marches on

> Washington won't end the war because peace marches . . . can't work in a fundamentally anti-democratic society." According to Weatherman, the antiwar leadership "constantly held back the political and tactical growth of the movement"[29]

The call to bring the war home understood that American society and its institutions were bound up with support for the war on Vietnam and as such the necessary course of action was not merely to apply pressure to the government to change policy. But what was needed to truly commit to anti-Imperialist support for the Vietnamese national liberation struggle was for domestic opposition to bring down the whole system responsible for the war in Vietnam.

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[29] Ibid.

(Bring the War Home – Chicago Oct. 9th – 11th SDS.)

Following such tendencies of a militant Anti-Vietnam War movement against the American establishment were the 1971 May Day protests in Washington D.C. These protests brought tens of thousands of anti-war demonstrators to the capital, a result of the culmination of weeks of anti-war activity in the city that spring. Though in contrast to the Days of Rage the protests were framed as "non-violent civil disobedience" the announced goal was to disrupt the basic functioning of the government. The immediate focus

of the protesters was on blocking off key areas of the city, particularly points of traffic conversion, in order to prevent government employees from getting to work on Monday May 3, as well as the idea to storm government offices and buildings to physically prevent the carrying out of the everyday bureaucracy of state institutions.[30]

[30] Georgetown University Library. 2021, *The Most Influential Protest You've Never Heard Of: May Day, 1971,* Available at: https://library.georgetown.edu/exhibition/most-influential-protest-you%E2%80%99ve-never-heard-may-day-1971

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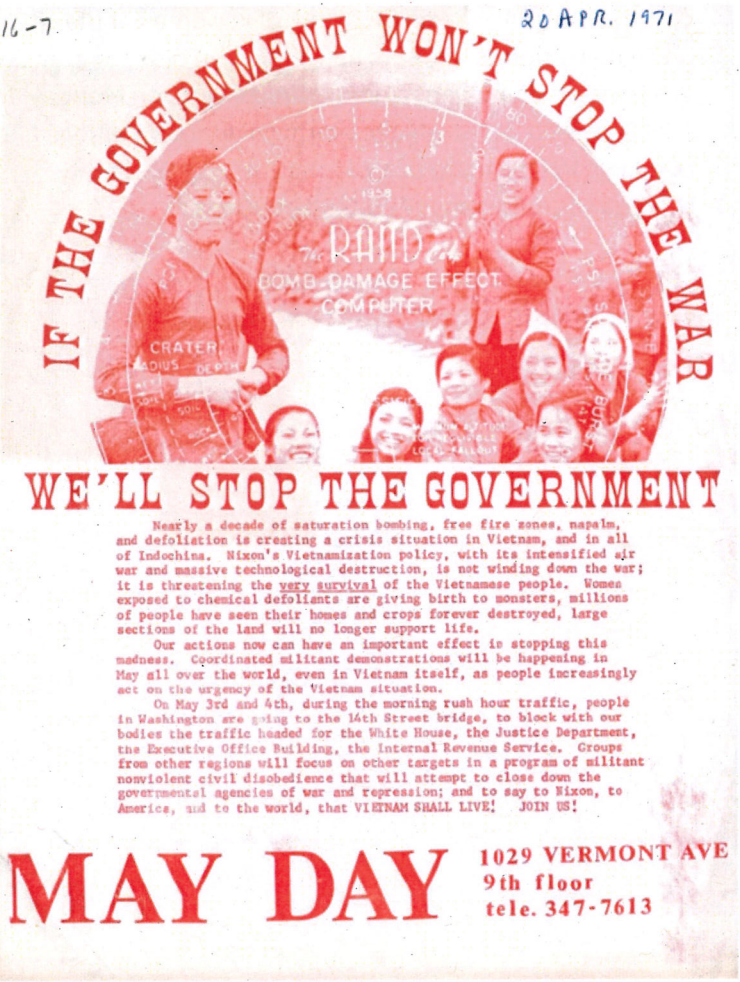
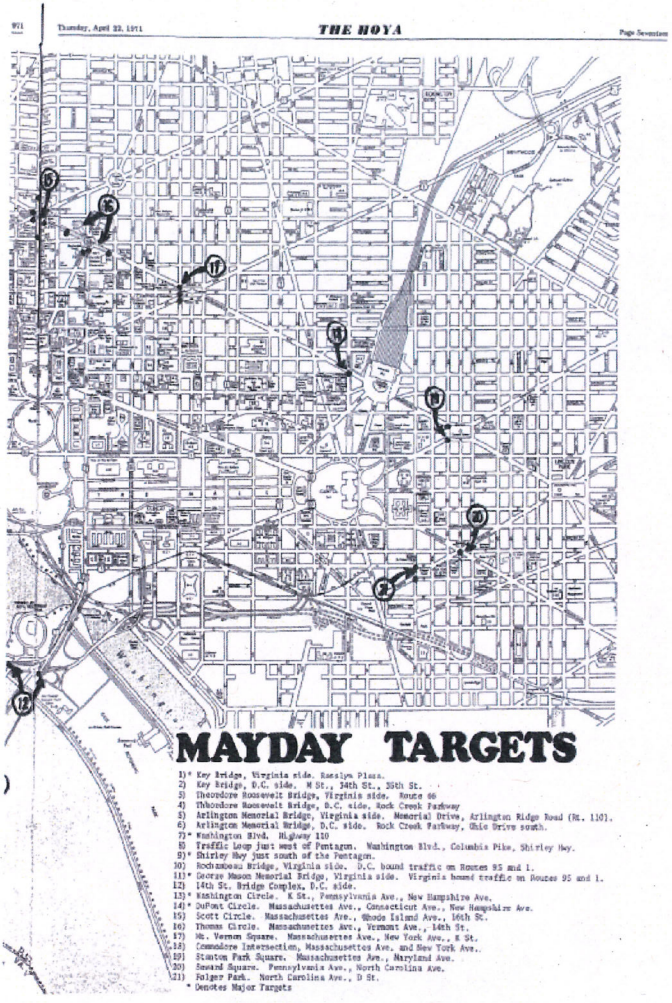
20 APR. 1971


IF THE GOVERNMENT WON'T STOP THE WAR
BOMB DAMAGE EFFECT COMPUTER
CRATER
WE'LL STOP THE GOVERNMENT
Nearly a decade of saturation bombing, free fire zones, napalm, and defoliation is creating a crisis situation in Vietnam, and in all of Indochina. Nixon's Vietnamization policy, with its intensified air war and massive technological destruction, is not winding down the war; it is threatening the very survival of the Vietnamese people. Women exposed to chemical defoliants are giving birth to monsters, millions of people have seen their homes and crops forever destroyed, large sections of the land will no longer support life.
Our actions now can have an important effect in stopping this madness. Coordinated militant demonstrations will be happening in May all over the world, even in Vietnam itself, as people increasingly act on the urgency of the Vietnam situation.
On May 3rd and 4th, during the morning rush hour traffic, people in Washington are going to the 14th Street bridge, to block with our bodies the traffic headed for the White House, the Justice Department, the Executive Office Building, the Internal Revenue Service. Groups from other regions will focus on other targets in a program of militant nonviolent civil disobedience that will attempt to close down the governmental agencies of war and repression; and to say to Nixon, to America, and to the world, that VIETNAM SHALL LIVE! JOIN US!
MAY DAY
1029 VERMONT AVE
9th floor
tele. 347-7613

(May Day, "If the Government won't stop the war we'll stop the Government")


971
Thursday, April 22, 1971
THE HOYA
Page Seventeen
MAYDAY TARGETS
1)* Key Bridge, Virginia side. Rosslyn Plaza.
2) Key Bridge, D.C. side. M St., 34th St., 35th St.
3) Theordore Roosevelt Bridge, Virginia side. Route 66
4) Theordore Roosevelt Bridge, D.C. side, Rock Creek Parkway
5) Arlington Memorial Bridge, Virginia side. Memorial Drive, Arlington Ridge Road (Rt. 110).
6) Arlington Memorial Bridge, D.C. side. Rock Creek Parkway, Ohio Drive south.
7)* Washington Blvd. Highway 110
8) Traffic Loop just west of Pentagon. Washington Blvd., Columbia Pike, Shirley Hwy.
9)* Shirley Hwy just south of the Pentagon.
10) Roosevelt Bridge, Virginia side. D.C. bound traffic on Routes 95 and 1.
11)* George Mason Memorial Bridge, Virginia side. Virginia bound traffic on Routes 95 and 1.
12) 14th St. Bridge Complex, D.C. side.
13)* Washington Circle. K St., Pennsylvania Ave., New Hampshire Ave.
14)* DuPont Circle. Massachusetts Ave., Connecticut Ave., New Hampshire Ave.
15) Scott Circle. Massachusetts Ave., Rhode Island Ave., 16th St.
16) Thomas Circle. Massachusetts Ave., Vermont Ave., 14th St.
17) Mt. Vernon Square. Massachusetts Ave., New York Ave., K St.
18) Commodore Intersection, Massachusetts Ave. and New York Ave.
19) Stanton Park Square. Massachusetts Ave., Maryland Ave.
20) Seward Square. Pennsylvania Ave., North Carolina Ave.
21) Folger Park. North Carolina Ave., D St.
* Denotes Major Targets

(Mayday Targets, A map of the Central Business District of Washington D.C.).

(May Day, picturing the Viet Cong Flag and the Vietnamese dragon breathing flowers).

The slogan of the protests was "*If the government won't stop the war, we'll stop the government*" and they became some of the largest mass direct-actions in U.S. protest history:

> "Small battles raged all over the city as demonstrators would build crude barricades, disperse when the police came and then regroup to rebuild the dismantled obstructions," ... "We threw everything available into the streets," one participant wrote afterwards in the *Berkeley Tribe*, "garbage cans, parked cars, broken glass, nails, large rocks, and ourselves."[31]

In contrast to the forms taken in most of the Palestine solidarity protests we have seen, as well as the model of boycott and divestment framed by the BDS Movement, the method of strategy here was akin to a popular strike, if not insurgency, against the infrastructure of state bureaucracy which maintained Imperialist war in Vietnam. These protests were explicitly connected to the continued subjugation of domestic resistance through the expanding prison-carceral war on Socialist, Indigenous and Black resistance (the Attica Revolt occurred four months after this protest). By the end of May 3rd, after three days of protests, street blockades and deployment of the military,

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[31] Rumberger, A. "In 1971, the People Didn't Just March on Washington — They Shut It Down", *Verso,* 21st February 2017, available at: https://www.versobooks.com/en-gb/blogs/news/3101-in-1971-the-people-didn-t-just-march-on-washington-they-shut-it-down

more than 7,000 protesters had been arrested across the city and placed in makeshift detention camps; 5000 more were arrested on May 4th and 5th. These represent the largest mass arrests for protest in U.S. history. Ultimately, however, only 79 people were convicted of any offence related to the protests.

What the Days of Rage, the development of the Weather Underground and the May Day Protests generated was a generalised atmosphere of militant rebellion and possibility. The scale of disruption, the willingness of hundreds, if not at times thousands of people to put themselves on the line and the level of militancy which was understood the situation required stands in stark contrast to what seems today after fifteen months of rallies, pickets and fake blockades a generalised atmosphere of fear, disempowerment and defeatism. I think resistance breathes life into possibility and the lack of militant resistance has stifled our ability to be creative and to imagine, to the point where the gap between theory words and radical practice is seemingly insurmountable.

'ACAB includes the peace police' – Vietnam War edition

What we think is possible is not merely stifled by counterinsurgent ideology, but rather the whitewashing of these histories informs and legitimates a practice of internal policing within our movements today. The structural policing of attempts at solidarity on the streets or at pickets by 'activist' and NGO leadership, union and party bureaucrats and most notably "peace police" protest marshals is legitimised through the denial and obscuring

of the militant Anti-Imperialist movements of the past. Where throughout the last fifteen months people around the world have been wanting to take their opposition to Imperialist war and Zionist colonialism much further than has been allowed yet this has been stifled, repressed and targeted by self-anointed rally leaders and protest marshals. Examples of this have stretched from the U.S., to Britain, to Australia.[32]

The counter-insurgent and honestly fucking obnoxious role of marshals has been *covered in depth elsewhere,*[33] so I won't rehash critiques here. What I would like to do is briefly contextualise this 'peace police' lineage going back to at least the 1960s. Where just as they do today, Liberals involved in the Anti-Vietnam war protests openly flaunted their attempts to anoint themselves as the arbiters of legitimate protest. Training peace police to target protestors that saw escalation as a legitimate course of action against Imperialist war:

> "While the "March Against Death" was taking place, we were busily training marshals who would

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[32] Katebi, H. "Police Want to Repress Palestine Solidarity — We Must Not Do Their Work for Them", *Truthout,* September 12th 2024, Available at: https://truthout.org/articles/police-want-to-repress-palestine-solidarity-we-must-not-do-their-work-for-them/

[33] Some Abolitionists in LA. *Peace Police are Police,* Available at: https://trueleappress.wordpress.com/2024/03/05/peace-police-are-police/ ; Anonymous. *ACAB includes peace police*, Available at: https://ia904504.us.archive.org/21/items/zines-war/ACAB_Includes_Peace_Police.pdf

> oversee the demonstration — that is, essentially be our own force of nonviolent peacekeepers. We were rightfully concerned that groups of Weathermen-style protesters would disrupt our demonstration regardless of how creative our tactics were"[34]

Self-appointing and training your own anti-protest army – while people are on the streets attempting to combat the government-sanctioned obliteration of hundreds of thousands in Vietnam – collaborating with police repression and being *proud* of that – has deep parallels to plenty of rally-based organisations today.[35] Obviously peace police are liberal wreckers. The point here however is that our lack of militancy and of a consistent ideology of Anti-Imperialist internationalism, has allowed these counterinsurgent methods to become almost hegemonic throughout the Western Palestine solidarity movement.

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[34] Levering, R. 2017, "How anti-Vietnam War activists stopped violent protest from hijacking their movement", *Open Democracy,* Available at: https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/transformation/how-anti-vietnam-war-activists-stopped-violent-protest-from-hijacking/

[35] See Palestine Action Group Sydney's own view to ownership over "our" movement in their restricting of flares, resistance flags and face coverings at their protest and open collaboration with the police to arrest protestors. Palestine Action Group Sydney, 2023, *Facebook,* 19th October, Available at: https://www.facebook.com/story.php/?story_fbid=340178095339631&id=100080423289614 ; Action Against Apartheid, 2024, *Instagram,* 1st October, Available at: https://www.instagram.com/p/DAlCI_1vFtJ/?img_index=1&igsh=cm1tYXJnM21uc2Rh

The result is a method of practice not conducive to the victories achieved by the Anti-Vietnam war movement.

'The object is not to protest. The object is to make a change.'

The various networks and organisations that made up the Anti-Vietnam war protests were not only idly marching from A to B each week, chanting Liberalised slogans in coordination with local police and state officials. Nor was the dominant strategy one which attempted simply to apply moral pressure to force an Imperialist government to change policy from its participation in immoral acts for humanitarian reasons, while leaving the structures of imperialism intact. There was an explicit recognition that the breaking of the back of American Imperialism in Vietnam was a necessary step to the destruction of American Empire and its brutal repression of poor, Black, Immigrant and Indigenous peoples at home.

As Ben Morea, cofounder of the New York insurrectional street gang, Up Against the Wall, Motherfucker! — reflects on the militancy of the April 1968 student occupation of Columbia University they participated in:

> "We were there to support the Black students and the SDS, and to some degree, the issue of Vietnam came up for us. But, overall it was a revolutionary act that was a way to bring about the realization that something was amiss and had to be corrected. It was just one part of our whole life. Yes, we wanted to destroy the university ... The object is not to protest. The object is to make a

change. There is overlap with protesting, and some parallels exist. But the main thing isn't to protest, meaning you are bringing pressure to bear morally. We didn't want to bring pressure. We wanted to stop things."

South Africa and the Anti-Apartheid Movement: It wasn't about the oranges

(Cuban soldiers display a poster of Fidel Castro on January 9, 1989, during a ceremony held at the Cuban training camp of Punda, near Luanda, Angola.)

> *"To the Cuban people internationalism is not only a word but something which they have put into practice for the benefit of large sectors of mankind ... The decisive defeat of the aggressive apartheid forces destroyed the myth of the invincibility of the white oppressor... Cuito Cuanavale marked an important step in the struggle to free the continent and our country of the scourge of apartheid."*[36] – Nelson Mandela

This is Nelson Mandela in a speech made in Cuba in 1991, with Fidel Castro and thousands of Cubans in attendance. Here he is talking about a battle most of us have never heard of, an armed struggle of which many who boycotted South African goods were likely not aware, in a country no one mentions as relevant to the story of the Anti-Apartheid liberation movement, yet nevertheless Mandela states was a pivotal event leading to the fall of Apartheid in South Africa.

As with Vietnam, we have been informed of a feel good story about protests against Apartheid South Africa that prioritises and credits *us* and our actions in the West through a largely peaceful "civil-disobedience" and boycott movement. It is a story where individuals, celebrities and communities, primarily in Britain and the

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[36] Web Exclusive, 2013, "Nelson Mandela on How Cuba "Destroyed the Myth of the Invincibility of the White Oppressor", *Democracy Now,* Available at: https://www.democracynow.org/2013/12/11/nelson_mandela_on_how_cuba_destroyed

United States but also a few other Western countries such as France and the Netherlands, boycotted South African goods such as Outspan Oranges and related sports and cultural events; pressured banks and local councils to divest funds from South African affiliated institutions and where trade unions engaged in boycotts, strikes and divestments prioritising a refusal to work with anything going to or from South Africa. It is these peaceful civil-disobedience actions, we are told, that were the primary motors that eventually led to the unbanning of the ANC (African National Congress), the release of Nelson Mandela and many other political prisoners and the end of Apartheid opening up to a democratic era in South Africa. Yet once again, this can be understood as whitewashed history with continuing counterinsurgent effects on contemporary solidarity with the Palestinian struggle today.[37]

This presentation of events vastly overexaggerates the impact of Western solidarity practices within the anti-Apartheid struggle while obscuring how Apartheid was overthrown and what has led to the maintenance of

[37] This whitewashed history continues to be promoted by the Boycott National Committee, affiliates of the BDS Movement, academics, Human Rights NGO's and self-serving unions and protest movement leaders. This is not to say that none of these forms of protest or boycott in the West were effective, or should not have been done. Rather, it is to reveal how these aspects of the struggle have been prioritised so as to erase, demilitarise and decouple a revolutionary Anti-Apartheid struggle rooted in African national liberation and Socialism confronting White Supremacy, Imperialism and Capitalism.

economic apartheid and inequality in South Africa today.[38] More importantly for the argument of this essay, this history obscures the related themes of Anti-Imperialist solidarity with armed national liberation struggles on the ground in Southern Africa whose actions were, in the words of veterans of the Anti-Apartheid struggle such as Nelson Mandela, Neville Alexander and Ronnie Kasrils, the primary forces which led to the fall of Apartheid.

Regional Anti-Apartheid Struggles

The two driving forces which can be said to have defeated Apartheid in South Africa were, firstly, the liberation struggle of the African National Congress and its military wing MK (uMkhonto weSizwe "Spear of the Nation") constituting the mass struggle of Black South Africans and secondly, the African national liberation movements that achieved independence from Portuguese, British and South Africa colonialism forming the frontline states throughout the 1970s-1980s of Botswana, Zambia, Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Namibia. While today Israel is framed as an aberration in its routine violation of the national sovereignty of its Arab neighbours and its bloody campaigns across the region in Lebanon, Syria, Iran and Yemen alongside its ongoing battles with Hezbollah and

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[38] For more on this and its relationship to Palestine see: Clarno, A. 2017, *Neoliberal Apartheid: Palestine/Israel and South Africa after 1994* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago); Dana, J. (2020), "Palestine/Israel and South Africa after 1994". *+972 Magazine,* (Available at: https://www.972mag.com/south-africa-capitalism-apartheid/). This is a good article but also fuck +972 Mags ongoing Liberal Zionist apologetics.

Ansar Allah; South Africa too routinely bombed, invaded and assassinated its way through Southern Africa in its attempts to destroy the ANC and destabilise sympathetic African governments and liberation movements.[39] Unlike how it is often presented, the confrontation against the white supremacist Apartheid regime was not primarily seen as a single struggle within the borders of South Africa for the integration of Black human rights. The struggle against apartheid was understood explicitly as a national liberation project against a white settler colonial entity which oppressed Africans across the continent, just as the Zionist apartheid entity of Israel does across the Middle-East today.

As South African revolutionary and incarcerated intellectual Neville Alexander articulated, in reference to the revolutionary Azania Manifesto:

> "The immediate goal of the national liberation struggle now being waged in South Africa is the destruction of the system of racial capitalism. Apartheid is simply a particular socio-political expression of this system. Our opposition to apartheid is therefore only a starting point for our

[39] Horne, G. 2019, *White Supremacy Confronted: U.S. Imperialism and Anti-Communism vs. the Liberation of Southern Africa, From Rhodes to Mandela* (International Publishers: New York).

> struggle against the structures and interests which are the real basis of apartheid."[40]

In direct contrast to this, the Palestinian struggle has been presented across the Western Solidarity movement as a civil society campaign of ending the violation of Palestinian "human rights" of which Apartheid and settler colonialism are supposedly structured primarily to do. As opposed to Apartheid and settler colonialism being socio-economic and political structures designed to meet particular ends (capital accumulation, development of private property, denial of indigenous sovereignty, buttressing Western Imperialism etc.)[41] This was the primary role of South Africa in the region and the reason why many Imperialist Western states, particularly Britain, continued to support the regime as an aspect of American Empire economically, military and diplomatically until it was no longer sustainable to do so.[42]

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[40] Alexander, N. 2023, 'Nation and Ethnicity in South Africa' in Motala, E. and Vally, S. (eds.) *Against Racial Capitalism: Selected Writings Neville Alexander* (London: Pluto Press); Also see: South African History Online (1984) *Azanian Manifesto*, Available at: https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/azanian-manifesto ; South African History Online. 2016, "*Azanian Manifesto*", Available at: https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/azanian-manifesto

[41] Turner, K. "Palestine and the Dialectic of Racial Capitalism", *Journal of Holy Land and Palestine Studies*, 23(2, October), pp. 143-164, doi: https://doi.org/10.3366/hlps.2024.0336

[42] Horne, G. 2019, *White Supremacy Confronted: U.S. Imperialism and Anti-Communism vs.*

As such, the Apartheid regimes battles against national liberation movements and independent ANC aligned states such as Angola, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique were of vital importance to its eventual collapse and yield important historical parallels for us today. In supporting Portuguese colonialism in its death throws and the Apartheid regime of Rhodesia in repressing national liberation movements working alongside MK cadres, the South African regime was engaged in increasing wars, security operations and military campaigns in order to suppress the rising tide of containment by Soviet-aligned independent African states which were engaged in direct diplomatic, military and technical support of the ANCs campaigns across the border into South Africa. The sustainability of MK and its underground networks relied directly upon the support of movements, networks and states spanning across the geographical borders of Southern Africa,[43] just as is the case with AlQassam in Gaza today, with support from Hezbollah, Iran and Ansar Allah. While there is often a conscious attempt to strip Palestine from the struggles of the Middle East for national sovereignty and social

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the Liberation of Southern Africa, From Rhodes to Mandela (International Publishers: New York); Boehmer, S. 2024, "Questionable Allies: British Collaboration with Apartheid South Africa, 1960–90", *The International History Review,* 46(1, August), pp. 102-119, doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2023.2250804

[43] Kasrils, R. (ed.), Andersson, M. (ed.), Marleyn, O. (ed.), *International Brigades Against Apartheid: Secrets of the People's War that Liberated South Africa* (Daraja Press: Québec).

development more broadly - and the armed Palestinian factions from "Palestinians" writ large - regional armed struggles and national liberation movements supporting the struggle of the ANC trapped the Apartheid regime in a prolonged social, economic, political and diplomatic crises that eventually led to its collapse.[44]

These movements were supported to a large extent by the Soviet Union and China, with the Socialist state of Cuba playing a decisive role in the defeat of the South African military at the battle of Cuito Cuanavale, Angola, from 1987 to 1988. Seen as the decisive turning point in the independence of Namibia, the retreat of South African forces from Angola and the end of Apartheid, as Black Radical Historian Gerald Horne contends:

> "the ascendance of communists and Social democrats in Lisbon led directly to independence for Mozambique and Angola in 1975 and proved inspirational in South Africa, leading to the Soweto uprising of 1976 and an acceleration of militancy that made the nation ungovernable ... In the preceding months of 1988 the Cuban forces and their Southern African allies unleashed a withering defeat for Pretoria at Cuito Cuanavale, which turned the tide in favor of liberation. Cuban pilots

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[44] Ismail, A. "Internationalists who joined the Peoples war", in Kasrils, R. (ed.), Andersson, M. (ed.), Marleyn, O. (ed.), *International Brigades Against Apartheid: Secrets of the People's War that Liberated South Africa* (Daraja Press: Québec), pp. 72-77. (pp. 75-76).

> flying MIG-23 fighter jets of Soviet make proved to be decisive, further angering hawks in Washington. Israel denied that it was fighting alongside the apartheid military; others were not so sure. Whatever the case, it was downhill from here for apartheid with Namibian independence becoming more likely and the ouster of the humbled Nationalist Party veritably assured"[45]

In other words, the overthrow of Apartheid was not achieved primarily through an international "civil rights" campaign engaged in peaceful marches. Rather, it was achieved through an integrated *peoples war* supported by international solidarity networks – in 1978 a delegation of MK visited Vietnam and met with Vo Ngyuyen Giap, the former Commander in Chief of the People's Army of Vietnam, to learn tactics and strategies for carrying out such a liberation campaign[46] - that forced the Apartheid regime to overextend its capacities in confronting its multiple enemies both across the border and from within. Liberation struggles in Namibia and Angola, alongside growing social unrest and mobilization within South Africa

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[45] Horne, G. 2019, *White Supremacy Confronted: U.S. Imperialism and Anti-Communism vs. the Liberation of Southern Africa, From Rhodes to Mandela* (International Publishers: New York), p. 493, p. 744).

[46] Ismail, A. "Internationalists who joined the Peoples war", in Kasrils, R. (ed.), Andersson, M. (ed.), Marleyn, O. (ed.), *International Brigades Against Apartheid: Secrets of the People's War that Liberated South Africa* (Daraja Press: Québec), pp. 72-77

itself, drained the apartheid state's treasury.[47] I believe such an end is prophetic in watching the Zionist entities endless colonial wars of expansion against embattled anti-colonial forces across the region and in Palestine itself.

International Brigades Against Apartheid

International solidarity with the ANC extended well beyond peaceful, symbolic and economic means and into clandestine operations supporting the guerilla war. Internationalist volunteers, co-ordinated directly by the ANC leadership in exile, undertook the role of couriers, transporters, weapons carriers, safehouse coordinators, cadre traffickers and in some cases enacted sabotage operations against the Apartheid Regime. Individuals from countries such as Britain, Portugal, Belgium, Canada and Holland led double lives across Southern Africa, carrying out tasks for the ANC underground as part of what came to be referred to as the Ubuntu brigades – a complex underground network in support of MK. Their proximity to whiteness was a crucial element in their ability to slip under the radar of the Apartheid regimes police and security forces: 'white internationalists from Europe and North America were especially successful in getting material into the country with the application of the 'reverse apartheid' thinking where whites were generally

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[47] Luiz, J. 1998, "The Evolution and Fall of the South African Apartheid State: A Political Economy Perspective", *Ufahamu,* 26(2-3), pp. 49-72, available at: https://escholarship.org/content/qt7qs6h7fx/qt7qs6h7fx.pdf(open in a new window)

not suspect and had freedom of movement denied to black people.'

As Kasrils details, particularly after the 1979 delegation to Vietnam, the ANC developed a model of people's war that was summarised in the "four pillars of struggle": mass political struggle as the primary element; reinforced by armed operations; an underground network capable of facilitating all aspects of resistance; and international solidarity.[48] Kasrils describes how International solidarity was a crucial aspect of the struggle, but it was there to reinforce the armed and mass struggle of the Black majority in South Africa for national liberation from Apartheid, white supremacy and colonial domination:

> "We regarded internationalism as a major pillar of the struggle to overthrow apartheid. We had four pillars: politics was always primary, political leadership, political mobilization of the people, etc. [We believed] that that's what would end apartheid, the struggle of the people of South Africa. That would be reinforced by an underground network that would distribute leaflets, help smuggle in weapons, and could give guidance to the aboveground organizations, social organizations, community, youth, trade unions,

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[48] Kasrils, R. 2022, "A concept of Internationalism: The Ubuntu Brigade", in Kasrils, R. (ed.), Andersson, M. (ed.), Marleyn, O. (ed.), *International Brigade Against Apartheid: Secrets of the People's War That Liberated South Africa* (Daraja Press: Quebec), pp. 14-20. (p. 17).

and so on, which were in the 1980s developing in quite an energetic way."[49]

This was an alternative strategy to what occurred during the Vietnam War, where Western militaries were directly involved with troops on the ground in order to occupy and contain the Vietnamese national liberation struggle and as such militant opposition in the West was directed inwards towards peoples own governments. As South Africa was a white settler colony oppressing the Black indigenous majority, the strategy of the international solidarity campaign took the form of cutting off life support for the Apartheid regime while volunteers participated further afield in aiding the struggle on the ground achieve their military, strategic and political objects of mass social upheaval. The point here is less that there is a specific strategy that should be carried out by Western solidarity to confront Zionism either domestically or on the ground in Palestine. Rather, like with the Anti-Vietnam War protests, it is to demonstrate that there was a level of militancy and solidarity premised upon shared material risk and sacrifice with the Anti-Apartheid Movement that allowed the ANC to overthrow Apartheid that has been almost completely

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[49] This is a useful interview with Kasrils. As far as I'm aware Tribune has made no mention of the fact many of the unions it often provides space for have been actively complicit in the genocide in Gaza. Dorling, O. "Anti-Apartheid's International Militants", *Tribune*, 1st October 2023, Available at: https://tribunemag.co.uk/2023/10/anti-apartheids-international-militants

erased and pacified with the Palestine solidarity movement today.

Boycott, Divestment and ... Armed Struggle?

Like the pro-Palestine movement today, the anti-apartheid movement engaged in boycotts, pickets, marches and workers' strikes.[50] But these solidarity practices were co-ordinated in relation to supporting the ANC - alongside organisations such as SWAPO in Namibia - on the ground as it engaged in a practice of armed struggle. The cultural and economic boycotts of the global Anti-Apartheid Movement existed in tandem with weapons trafficking, sabotage, bombings and armed conflict against the military, police and security apparatus of the Apartheid state. These operated as parts of a systemic whole that made up the international Anti-Apartheid struggle in solidarity with the national liberation struggles of the peoples of Southern Africa.

The ANC had openly been engaged in armed struggle against the Apartheid state from 1961. It is not as if the international Anti-Apartheid Movement did not know about the ANC's armed struggle or the armed struggle of affiliated organisations such as SWAPO. MK had been founded as the military wing of the ANC by Nelson Mandela after the Sharpeville massacre against South African protestors. Mandela's imprisonment along with eleven other members of the ANC in the 1964 Rivonia trial

[50] Albeit to a much greater extent than the pro-Palestine movement today.

were on the charges of sabotage and attempting to overthrow the apartheid government through armed struggle. In fact, Amnesty International refused to campaign for Mandela's release because he continued to support the use of armed struggle throughout his twenty-seven year imprisonment.[51]

It is understandable, then, why the messaging of the Anti-Apartheid Movement did not entirely reflect the slogans or the forms of strategy being taken today throughout the Western Palestine Solidarity Movement. It was not merely "free South Africa" but rather "solidarity with the ANC." The Anti-Apartheid Movement understood itself and its strategy as materially assisting the African National Congress as the leading representative (but not the only) organisation of the South African people against Apartheid. Take for example the messaging of these Anti-Apartheid Movement protests in London in the 1980s and 1990s:

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[51] Amnesty International. 2020, *Nelson Mandela and Amnesty International,* Available at: https://www.amnesty.org.uk/nelson-mandela-and-amnesty-international#:~:text=In%20the%20end%20we%20took,been%20seen%20to%20condone%20violence.

(Protest in London, 1985, with placards reading "Solidarity with the ANC" and a banner reading "African National Congress of South Africa.")

(Anti-Apartheid Movement and South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO), 18 April 1985.)

((Anti-apartheid demonstration on 16 June 1985, placards stating "Solidarity with the ANC", "Remember Soweto", "Free Nelson Mandela" and "Forwards to Freedom in Namibia and South Africa").

These exist in direct contrast to the way in which the Western Palestine Solidarity Movement and more specifically the leadership of the BDS Movement relates to the Palestinian national liberation struggle. In the Liberal desire to be seen as legitimate in the eyes of Western politicians, NGOs and media, the BNC has gone out of its way to present the struggle as an integrationist one for Palestinian "human rights" – as opposed to one of national liberation - while disciplining solidarity networks which align themselves politically and strategically to the armed resistance factions on the ground.

The BNC has issued a statement informing affiliated organisations not to express support for the Palestinian armed resistance - a move criticised by resistance organisations on the ground, with the PFLP and the Resistance News Network releasing official statements condemning the statement and pointing out the BNC's lack of consensus and democratic legitimacy in its attempts to appeal to Western Liberal legitimacy politics:[52]

> "All struggles for freedom around the world have seen various forms of struggle side by side, with armed resistance at their core. ... We call on the BNC to revise its position and align with the authentic national stance that glorifies resistance in all its forms."[53]

Despite the BDS Movement providing South Africa as a key comparative example of Apartheid and the struggle against it, the leadership of the BNC, alongside many within the Palestine solidarity movement, actively engage in a disruptive set of internal policing of the movement in order to disconnect international solidarity and the mass struggle of the Palestinian people from the armed resistance factions - in direct contrast to the model of struggle in which the ANC engaged itself. The BNC has

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[52] Press TV. "BDS antagonism toward armed Palestinian resistance", *Press TV,* 8th June 2024, Available at: https://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2024/06/08/727047/The-BDS-movement-has-distanced-itself-from-the-armed-struggle-against-Zionist-oppression

[53] Resistance News Network. Telegram, available at: t.me/PalestineResist

gone so far as to actively suppress the work of BDS networks, expending "significant energy attempting to silence support for Palestinian armed struggle and those who firmly reject all Zionists and normalizers",[54] both within and outside Palestine. Take for example the fact that the BDS Movement, or the Palestine Solidarity Campaign – Britain's largest Palestine focused NGO - has made no mention of Palestine Action in any statement - let alone support for the Palestinian armed resistance – even in articles which relate directly to the closure of Elbit Systems arms factories by PA's direct action campaign.[55]

The BNC and the call for Boycott Divestment and Sanctions upholds the call of Palestinian civil society organisations, but this was an option taken by Palestinian society after the intentional depoliticization of the Palestinian national movement following the disarming of the Palestine Liberation Organisation in the early 1990s in trading for a "two state solution" in Palestine which was never going to materialise. The move from political organizations to "civil society" has allowed for a bloated NGO with limited democratic capacities and compromised political allegiances to present themselves

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[54] Handallah, N. "A Tactic Not a Trademark: How the BDS National Committee Supports the Liberal Zionist Agenda", *Orinoco Tribune,* July 18th 2022, Available at: https://orinocotribune.com/a-tactic-not-a-trademark-how-the-bds-national-committee-supports-the-liberal-zionist-agenda/

[55] Palestinian BDS National Committee. 2022, *Elbit Factory Sale is Another Step to End Israeli Apartheid,* Available at: https://bdsmovement.net/news/elbit-factory-sale-another-step-end-israeli-apartheid

as the primary identifiers of the Palestinian cause and authority on what constitutes legitimate pro-Palestine activism around the world.[56] The promotion of Palestinian "rights" and the support for a generalised "free Palestine" with its primary focus on Palestinian "civilians" has been a specific strategy of counterinsurgency of the post-Oslo (1993 negotiations between the Palestine Liberation Organisation and Israel) period of the Palestinian Authority, "State-building" and "civil society" Western movements. It strips the struggle of a political content based in national indigenous sovereignty, expressed by existing Palestinian factions where popular legitimacy clearly aligns with Hamas and not the neocolonial comprador Palestinian Authority.[57]

After twenty years of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement, it is clear that the most successful event in forcing Israeli settlers to leave Palestine,[58] in

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[56] Handallah, N. 2022, "A Tactic Not a Trademark: How the BDS National Committee Supports the Liberal Zionist Agenda", *Wayback Machine,* 5th July, 2022, Available at: https://web.archive.org/web/20221103111937/https://jisrcollective.com/pages/a-tactic-not-a-trademark.html

[57] Ajl, M. Ajl, M. (2024). Palestine and the Ends of Theory. *Middle East Critique*, *33*(4, September), pp. 611–634, doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/19436149.2024.2404338

[58] No Author. "Thousands of Jews have left Israel since the October 7 attacks", *CBS News,* December 20th 2024, Available at: https://www.cbsnews.com/news/thousands-jews-leave-israel-after-october-7-attacks/#:~:text=Thousands%20of%20Israelis%20have%20left,sectors%20like%20medicine%20and%20tech.

forcing hundreds of companies to shut down and financially crippling the Zionist regime,[59] in releasing hundreds of Palestinian hostages from Zionist prisons,[60] was operation Al-Aqsa Flood on October 7th 2023. Despite the BNC's consistent attempt alongside many Western Palestine solidarity organisations to actively divorce themselves and the international solidarity movement from the armed struggle, the Palestinian political factions on the ground have demonstrated their resilience and capacity to represent themselves and the broader aspirations of the Palestinian national liberation movement.

From Boycott to Al Aqsa Flood: Where do we go from here

The last fifteen months have demonstrated that the model of international support provided either to the Viet Cong or the ANC is not what is being exhibited by the Western Palestine solidarity movement. We must therefore work to reclaim and reinform ourselves of the nature of historical

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[59] No Author. "As war widens and costs mount, Israel's economy is in 'serious danger', *The Washington Post,* September 26th 2024, Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/09/26/israel-economy-business-reservists-war/

[60] Adler, N. Kurmelovs, R. McCready, A. Osgood, B. Uras, U. Siddiqui, U. "Updates: Israel frees 183 Palestinians after 3 captives released in Gaza", *AlJazeera,* 1st February 2025, Available at: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/liveblog/2025/2/1/live-israel-hamas-to-exchange-3-captives-in-gaza-for-183-palestinians

struggles so that they may effectively inform a solidarity in the present rooted in an authentic and material Anti-Imperialism.

An Al Qassam fighter has said "The only message I want to send to the Israelis is that bodies die, but ideas will never die."[61] But ideas can be repressed, obscured, mystified. As we have seen, anti-Imperialist ideology and history continues to be whitewashed even amongst our own movements for the sake of self-serving narratives. The meaning and content of what constitutes *solidarity* and *resistance* has been so transformed, so redesigned by the NGO activist complex and self-serving Eurocentric and white histories, it barely registers that what occurs now in terms of protest and "political education" can be understood as the same set of practices and relationships that occurred and were formed during these symbolic historical struggles against Imperialism, capitalism and white supremacy.

I believe that living in the West not only requires of us a duty to stand against a system of capitalist Imperialism which maintains a world divided by colour and colonial exploitation for the benefit of (white) citizens in the North. I think more importantly, our placement in the West provides us with an ability which most people who suffer

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[61] The Cradle. (@TheCradleMedia), "A Qassam Brigades fighter says: "The only message I want to send to the Israelis is that bodies die, but ideas will never die.", Twitter, 1ST February 2025, Available at: https://x.com/TheCradleMedia/status/1885642422522126530

from the depravities of Imperialism around the world do not have, to strike at its heart. The current ceasefire does not signify an end to colonial war, but merely a displacement of Zionist barbarism elsewhere; specifically now into the West Bank. The peace policing, the whitewashing of past struggles, the Liberal humanitarian moralism, the performative showcasing of a solidarity empty of concrete action – these are all designed to pacify the possibilities of a militancy and radical solidarity which is not only realizable but has been shown time and again to be effective.

The essence of material solidarity is to raise the social cost of Zionism on the home Imperialist front. By reinscribing radical Anti-imperialist history into our theory and practice we can generate a militant strategy in coordination with the movements of the Palestinian national liberation forces on the ground, as they continue to wage war on Zionist colonialism. 'Bringing the war home' in essence, calls on us to abolish counterinsurgency from our movements in favour of aligning ideologically and practically with the AlQassam armed fighter and the Fellaheen rock thrower.

"We were not strong enough to drive out a half-million American troops, but that wasn't our aim... Our intention was to break the will of the American Government. ... In war there are the two factors - human beings and weapons. Ultimately, though, human begins are the decisive factor. Human beings!" – Vo Nguyen Giap